

# ROBERT TWIGG, KNIGHT-ERRANT

By Kate Jordan

ROBERT TWIGG was a profoundly constant man. He did not realize it. This attribute was like the marrow of his spine, vital and unconsidered. It was constancy cemented into habit which made him an inmate of Mrs. Whimple's boarding-house for eighteen years, without his changing his seat at the table or his first-floor back room. During that time he had never varied his breakfast except in the matter of fruit, which changed with the season. Robert never changed. The same vice of habit had kept him with the firm of Burritt & Patterson, a big department shop on Broadway, for twelve years. There he had sat through the many duplicated days, making out memoranda on small slips of paper and answering the inquiries of a line of orris-scented, petted, garrulous and sometimes rude shoppers.

But when his first reserve was split like a shell a few people had been privileged to make discoveries about Robert Twigg. They found he was neither an uninspired clod nor a fool with a profound manner. An English actor, who during a season had come for his tea and marmalade breakfasts to Mrs. Whimple's, once described him to a chum at the theatre as they both stood under the gaslight rubbing in the grease paint:

"That American clerk I told you of is really extraordinary. He looks like a bounder, has reddish hair in a thin scallop on his forehead, and small, heavy eyes, and his life is as dull as the life of a grocer's horse; but the fellow has really an unusual imagination. He's bubbling with romance.

He knows the poets by heart. He knows all that's going on in the world of art. He sees only the best plays, from gallery seats. You should hear him on Shakespeare. My eye! he made me sit up. And what a sense of beauty—a sunset at the end of a street, a flower, a picture—well—you should have heard what he's said of them. Why, the fellow lives in his dreams. He's a Claude Melnotte inside of him, he is, indeed."

But Robert had this beauty and art and intelligence superficially, like so much floating driftwood, not deep enough in his character to form an oar to push him to accomplishment. Then he was in the grip of habit. Most important of all he was handicapped by a commonplace personality, for to look like a barber and be the fraction of an inch under five feet can be a tragedy in the life of a man. No woman had loved Robert Twigg.

One day the world changed for him. A new girl came to work at Burritt & Patterson's, and was placed behind the veiling counter. Chance or fate, or whatever it is that looks after the settings of the human drama, had noted that the veiling counter was close to the plate-glass window behind which Robert wrote on a small pad of paper all day long in fine Spencerian script. He was made aware of her arrival by a whisper in his ear from Reynolds, who looked after the exchanges and who was something of a wag.

"Seen the new girl in the veilings? A *peach*! Makes the whole bunch of stage beauties look like a lot of two-spots. A *corker*! There she is. Gee whiz—I'm for her!"

Robert obeyed Reynolds's excited nudge and looked up. All he said was:

"Very pretty. You seldom see a blonde as fair as that."

"And a real blonde," Reynolds continued, with an air of personal triumph; "none of your peroxide daisies there. I'm a regular Sherlock Holmes about paints and dyes and all that muck. They can't escape my eagle eye—the drug stores can't turn out *that* shade. Bet you fifty cents I know all she's telling about herself by tonight." He paused to do a few clog-dance steps. "Take me?"

"No," said Robert, and went on writing. But his heart was lighter. During the day he gave quick, furtive glances at the new girl.

"She's like moonlight," he thought. "Her hair's like the silvery floss around corn. . . . What color are her eyes? It doesn't matter—they are deep and mysterious. . . . How white her skin is! . . . Her mouth is like a little flower uncurling and just the color of coral. . . . How beautiful her throat is! . . . She's right to wear such a low little collar—her throat is so slender and round, as soft and white as the breast of a bird. . . . There's crape on her dress—that's why her smile comes so seldom and is a little sad. . . . What a refined, attentive air she has as she listens to the customers. . . . How they stare at her and speak to one another aside. They are talking about her beauty. She seems so unconscious of it. She's like a young princess. . . . Her name ought to be Dolores or Juliet or Perdita. . . . How beautiful the line of her chin is. . . . There never was such a perfect little nose. . . . She's like a flower in the twilight."

His thoughts ran this way through the day. The first vague glamour of romance tempered the business crudities and kept them from absorbing him in the customary way. It was after six and they were clearing their desks when Reynolds spoke of her again.

"Well, I've got things pat—I said I would. I'm a wonder. Listen:

Name, Mary Clement (I'll call her Mamie). Age, twenty-two. Unmarried. Nationality, English. Arrived three weeks ago on the *Britannic*. Orphan. Lives with married sister in Pelham. There you are—sounds like something for the Rogues' Gallery, but it's straight. Miss Donaghue told me. The girls are wild about her. They'll just make a queen of her, though she does make them all look like remnants."

Robert had only one regret. Mary was not a romantic name. As he walked home just as he had walked for twelve years, he did not see the gray streets, and only habit made him pause at Mrs. Whimple's. He had been wishing all the way that the new girl's name had been Annabel, like Annabel Lee, or Byron's Haidee, or the English Maud of Tennyson—"queen lily and rose in one." But when he looked at the back of his Webster's Dictionary that night and found that Mary meant "star of the sea" he was comforted. He realized that the name had been used so universally because it was beautiful. He said it over several times, giving the two syllables softly and slowly. It became like a new name to him, and it meant "star of the sea."

"She is like a white, clear star, and she has come over the sea from a far land," he said.

This made him think of England as he filled his pipe and sat by the open window looking out on clothes-lines, sheds, the windows of the boarding-houses in the next street; partially conscious, too, that an accordion, a flute and three different coon songs were making havoc of what might have been a peaceful twilight peeping between the roofs. He felt an understanding and delight in England because he knew Dickens and Thackeray so well and because of certain lectures with stereopticon views which he had attended. He had dreamed of going there one day and driving in a hansom through a fog, of really seeing the lions on Trafalgar Square, the jewels in the Tower, the Golden Cross Hotel, still standing, where David Copperfield had

met Steerforth. But he knew now he never would. It was very pleasant to think that Mary had seen all these things and many more. Perhaps some day she would tell him about England, about London most of all.

But the thought made him nervous. He was so shy with all women—except Mrs. Whimple—it was like a disease. The keenest suffering he knew was having to speak to a woman except on business. The social life of the boarding-house was a sealed book to him. He went up and down the stairs furtively, entering the dining-room with every nerve taut as he gave a vague, circular nod to certain azure, pink or white splashes that meant women, and afterward hurried away, darting into his own room like a culprit if he heard the rustle of skirts. So to be bold enough to think of speaking to Mary startled him. The feeling died away, leaving him humble. He would never speak to her, never. He felt sure of that. If other women seemed appalling just because they were women, what of this divinity, the first really beautiful human creature he had ever seen? He felt sure he would never speak to her. But it would be a pleasure to watch her all day long and think of her at night.

During two months this happiness was his. He did not once meet her eyes. He avoided such a possibility. If she had looked directly at him at other times he could have meant to her only a busy, narrow-shouldered clerk, with hair scant on top, the indoor pallor, set lips and constantly lowered eyes. Nature had given Robert a pastel-colored personality; he himself finished the work by further self-effacement, appearing, except to a sacred few—of whom Mrs. Whimple was chief—as a human machine, working and pausing at stated hours.

Reynolds's audacity tore the skin from his shyness at times, Reynolds attacking and he defending his sensitive reserve. This had often annoyed him, but since Mary's arrival Reynolds's slang and conceit had become very sweet, because he talked con-

stantly of her. Robert had the secret happiness of listening to an account of his attempts at an acquaintance with her, of hearing how difficult it was to "get on" with her, until at last she was stigmatized as "stuck up."

"Miss Donaghue introduced us. She told me she praised me to the skies and told Miss Clement I was IT. After a week of this I thought I might ask to call. *Nit!* She was seeing no one. Then I asked her to go to the theatre—Grand Opera House—dollar seats—big show—'Ben Hur'—chariot race. She *wouldn't*. Then I tried sending her a box of Huyler's. She gave it away to the girls and asked me never to send her anything again—she preferred not. *Yah!*" And Reynolds curled his mustache for comfort. "She's too much of a looker for me—stuck on herself. She should have stayed in England and hooked a prince. I guess she's out for a tiara. No more in mine, thanks."

So ended Reynolds's suit, and behind the wooden face with which Robert listened he rejoiced. Of course she was cold. Of course she despised the facetious, confident pursuit of Reynolds.

"'Star of the sea!'" Robert thought. "How could any man think himself fit to win her?"

He knew his sex sufficiently well, however, to feel sure that many men would seek her love without realizing any shortcomings in themselves. Indeed, it was astonishing to watch the masculine interest in dotted veils since she arrived at Burritt & Patterson's. The story of her beauty had spread from one to another, and men came in with sisters and cousins to see her; young college fellows came in twos and threes; Robert also saw older men, who caught sight of her while casually passing, pause and pass again and again. And with all this, Mary's seeming unconsciousness of this power in herself, the grace and dignity of her manner as she attended faithfully to her work, made these admirers as respectful as if they were gazing at her in a drawing-room.

But of course, Robert told himself, one day the end would come. Some

man, some unusual man, young, comely, powerful, rich—perhaps a leader in some cause, a writer or painter or a man holding big financial issues like threads between his fingers—would love and marry Mary. Only the nearest type to the Knights of the Round Table that this ugly modern life could furnish would be tolerable to Robert. He could accept him sadly, but with interest, and he was poised to meet this break at some distant day, perhaps years hence.

What happened was different. One Monday Mary was not in her place. Robert saw Reynolds out at the veiling counter talking to Miss Donaghue and several excited girls. A cold feeling of awe and dismal expectancy swept over him. He was prepared, from the evident excitement and many gestures, to hear that some tragic thing had happened to Mary—that she was ill or dead.

"Well, what do you think?" Reynolds asked, his tone big with information when he came into the office. "Mary Clement's gone. That Madame Chalbery, the French painter's wife, is just crazy about her. She's talked to her about posing for her husband, but at first Miss C. wouldn't—too high and mighty. The other night the painter's wife got her to go to the studio, and there Miss C. met the painter, and he told her he had been looking for her for years for his greatest work—a lot of frescoes or something like that about Elaine, whoever the lady was."

"Elaine!" Robert thought. He felt the artist's joy in his mollusk-like soul, as a fancy of Mary rose before him bending over Lancelot's shield or on her death-barge with lily hands folded.

"So she's gone," Reynolds continued. "She's to be paid three times as much as she got here. Next year all the stuff is to be put up in the Paris Salon."

Robert sat mute. He was saying good-bye to such knowledge of Mary as he had known. He might never see her again. He did not know whether

news of artists' models, even wonderful ones, ever got into the public prints; perhaps not; so he might never hear of her.

Robert was leaden-hearted that night. This soul, mind, eye worship had meant more to him these two months than even he had realized. There was nothing to look forward to now on awaking in the morning. Mary had gone and with her had vanished the phantom of herself that had joyously companioned him in his silence and obscurity. But a nature shrinking from ordinary contact with real people and finding a sufficient world between the covers of books, the stage from a gallery seat, the study of beautiful things, dreams, and such an ideal as this of a stranger whose voice he had heard only speaking to others, was bound to reconstruct something from its loss and live on that.

So Robert fashioned for himself a hope, and daily it grew more beautiful, more convincing. She *might* come in to see Miss Donaghue; he *might* meet her on the street; he would go to Pelham, where she lived with her sister, on one of his Sunday jaunts, and he *might* see her then.

All of these things during several months following came true. One day when he looked up he saw Miss Donaghue's stout, fresh face beaming as she shook both the hands of a girl in a soft, pale gray gown. A big hat held her eyes in shadow; she wore violets in her belt; there was color in her cheeks now—that faintest pink that lies in the crisped heart of a white rose. It was a transfigured Mary. Another day at his lunch hour, as he crossed Broadway to a dairy kitchen where he ate oatmeal and baked apples, he saw her in a hansom; he recognized the elderly woman with her as the painter's wife whose inquiries he had often attended to in the shop. Mary was laughing as he stood on the curb to let the hansom go by. Something white and fluffy blew away from her throat, leaving it bare.

He made three Sunday excursions to Pelham without success. But on

a very warm August morning he met her. She was strolling languidly up and down in the shade of some trees outside a small house of the villa type set back from the pavement; she was in a sheer white gown and without a hat; a little boy of three in a sailor-suit clung to her fingers.

"Daddy's coming on the next train, Peter," she was saying to the child as he passed. "Yes, you and mama and I are all going to meet him."

"Her sister's child," Robert thought as he went on, excited from the encounter. When he reached the corner of the street he paused. He wondered if he dare venture back. He grew courageous as he remembered Mary had not looked at him. He turned and met her again. This time she did look at him as at any stranger, but the look seemed a plummet laying his secret bare to her. He went on, red of face, and told himself in the train that this was the most important day of all. Their eyes had met and he knew their color now—a greenish gray, flecked like an agate.

It was January of the year following before he heard of her again, and this time it was in the society column of a daily paper. In Paris she had married a well-known American. To Robert the man was only a name, a powerful one whose syllables spelled wealth and social position. He thought of these first. Then, as he considered, he knew from all he had read of the name that it also spelled avarice, oppression, self-laudation, cruelty and sixty-five years. Doubt gave place to disappointment in Robert's heart, and these were followed by a sorrowful apprehension which settled upon him. Mary could not have loved this elderly, widowed man of granite, with children older than herself. He was sure of that. This was not the man he would have chosen for her, this was not the lion-hearted leader, with youth and love in his eyes, he had pictured as her fitting mate. He was hurt deeply. Mary had sold herself. There could be no doubt of it. She had been purchased in the market like any slave.

But he did not blame her. He blamed the false standards of society, the money-tainted advice of older women, the magnetism of the strong over the weak, perhaps a distaste for poverty, perhaps an empty heart. He recalled the wistful pathos that at times could flood Mary's eyes. If he should chance upon her in the future he felt sure he would see that look made enduring.

The day following he bought a scrap-book and pasted in it the account of her marriage. As Mrs. Nicholas Dunbar, he knew the papers would exploit her, and a new acquaintanceship through printer's ink would in this way be established between them. The scrap-book thickened with fluttering slips and newspaper cuts of her photograph during the winter. Besides, to Robert's surprise, she came frequently to Burritt & Patterson's, and always stopped to talk to Miss Donaghue. She wore beautiful clothes of delicate fabrics and colors, which told that her carriage waited for her. Once she paused at his window and spoke of a mistake in her bill. Once her husband was with her. Each time Robert saw, deeper in her eyes, the look he dreaded. Her air was weary; luxury seemed weighing her down. The day he saw her with her husband she was very pale and walked beside him with the air of a chidden child. Robert suffered with her. She was not happy. He believed she was eaten up with regret, "perked up in a glistening grief," wearing "a golden sorrow."

More than a year went by in this way, Robert reading of her social success, and seeing deeper heart-break in her face each time. The love that he gave Mary had something divine in it and gave him a wonderful intuition about her. When she began to come in, wearing a close veil and plainly dressed, to speak hurriedly to big, bluff, gray-haired Miss Donaghue, who sincerely loved her, when she withdrew her account from the shop, Robert knew that she had been forbidden to enter the place

where she had once served. He could understand her husband wishing to have this uninteresting chapter of her life quite closed. But he knew, too, she never would have clung intimately to Miss Donaghue's friendship had she been a happy woman in her new splendor. Thinking of her he read "The Lord of Burleigh" those days, and one verse clung to his memory like a burr:

But a trouble weighed upon her  
And perplexed her night and morn  
With the burden of an honor  
Unto which she was not born.

He wished he might help her. The longing tormented him. For the first time in his life his thoughts intruded between him and his work. He had never before felt an active rebellion against his unimportance. Now it irritated him to realize that, though he might burn with the chivalry of a knight-errant of the eleventh century in his lady's cause, he could do nothing. It was as vain a dream as to imagine a clothes-pin sustaining a planet.

Mrs. Whimple was holding up his newspaper as he went into the dining-room one morning. She was to a slight extent in his confidence about Mary.

"Here's news!" she cried, laying her finger on a prominent headline, and Robert read:

MRS. DUNBAR MISSING SINCE  
TUESDAY

"It'll take your breath away!" cried Mrs. Whimple.

But he was scarcely surprised. He had divined so much of Mary's distress from her face that he had felt that Tragedy skulked near her. He sat down, dull and cold, and read the story.

Mary had been missing a week, during which a quiet, thorough but unsuccessful search had been made for her. It had become impossible to keep such a news morsel out of the papers, and reporters now supplied statements, surmises and coloring to make it read like the beginning of a roman-

tic novel. As the story went, on the Tuesday night previous Mr. Dunbar had stepped from his opera-box to speak to some friend in another part of the house. When he returned his wife was not there. He had not seen her since nor received any message from her, nor any clue to lighten the puzzle. Theories of an unbalanced mind and possible suicide had been abandoned quickly, for further search at her home had proven that the flight had been carefully planned. A trunkful of clothes had been secretly sent away several days before; she had cashed a cheque that morning for a few thousand dollars. She had given no hint of her determination; no love story could be built as an explanation except on a baseless foundation. In an opera gown and cloak she had vanished into a fog where speculation was routed.

"She was a long time making up her mind to this, I guess," Miss Donaghue said to Reynolds a few days later as she lingered by the plate-glass window. "When she went she went for good."

Robert sat silently writing.

"You never spoke to Mary Clement when she was here, did you, Mr. Twigg?" asked Miss Donaghue.

"No," said Robert.

"The sweetest girl! A child at heart. She needed love, and a girl doesn't get that when she marries a sour-hearted tyrant like that Dunbar. One look at him settled him with me."

"What did she marry him for?" demanded Reynolds. "For gold—not for love," he declaimed. "Women are all alike."

"Her head was turned, I suppose. She was alone—an orphan—and so young. She wasn't in love with anyone else, either, Mr. Reynolds." And Miss Donaghue flashed her eyes scathingly at him in Mary's defense. "Dear, lovely, sweet girl—oh, I wish she'd send me a line. I'd do anything in the world for her."

"Tell me if she does," cried Reynolds in excitement.

"I'd be likely to—a gas-bag like you! No, if I needed to tell any man I guess I'd tell Mr. Twigg. He could keep a secret." She turned to him. "Couldn't you?"

The look that widened Robert's eyes was almost rapacious.

"Try me," he said in a low voice. She moved away a step. "You won't forget?" he found courage to say.

"Of course I won't," said Miss Donaghue cheerfully.

When the warm, long days of June came the clerks began to go away on their annual holidays of two weeks. Miss Donaghue left the middle of the month. It happened that Robert was scheduled to go a week later. Up to this time Mary's fate was still a mystery. The search, which continued, was mentioned at intervals, and interviews with Nicholas Dunbar were occasionally given, his wounded egotism taking shelter under a charge against his wife's sanity as the only explanation of an act he called incomprehensible.

"If he finds her he'll lock her up, sure's fate. She'll have a pleasant time with papa—I guess nit," said Reynolds, after reading a paragraph in an evening paper.

Robert made preparations for leaving the city to spend his annual two weeks on a farm in Dutchess County. In one way he hated leaving New York. He seemed going away from Mary. He reasoned, however, that this was a wild fancy. She might, of course, be in New York, hidden in the crowd; but it was just as likely she was hundreds of miles away. He would have a newspaper sent to him daily and would be quite as well informed regarding her as if he remained in the city.

The night before his proposed departure a telegram changed his plans. Only twice before in his trim, undeviating life had he been startled by the yellow envelope signifying haste, the unexpected, the significant; and to see it lying on his bureau when he entered his room was a sufficient sur-

prise, but the written words were astounding.

Come tomorrow morning. Most important. Need your help. Answer, Milford, Connecticut.

LIZZIE DONAGHUE.

It was a call to Mary! He felt it. With every step he took to the telegraph office he became more sure of this. The amazing, the unforeseen, the incredible had happened: *He was to help Mary!*

After sending word of his coming the next day, and on what train, he returned in a maze. All night, as he tossed in excited wakefulness, and on the train, he made a new acquaintance with himself. The enormity of this surprise had to some extent undone the deadening work of torpid years. Fate had selected him to be of vital service to the woman he loved. He must perform that service suitably, successfully, at whatever cost to himself. The ambition to be worthy of this opportunity, to perform what was expected of him became fanatical.

He found Miss Donaghue waiting for him at the station.

"Come," she said mysteriously, and they crossed the road to a buggy and horse, she constantly looking back, her chubby face pale. "Now, I'll explain that telegram," she said as she took up the reins.

"I think I know," said Robert, surprised at his own impulsiveness in interrupting her.

"You do? What?"

"Mrs. Dunbar is here."

"Hush—the very trees!" she whispered. "I'm afraid of them. Yes, you've guessed right. She's hiding at my mother's—came eight days ago." She gripped Robert's arm. "You've got to get Mary away to England. It takes a man to do it, and I thought of you because you're so quiet, so sure. 'Still waters run deep.' That's why I wired you instead of my brothers—when they take a glass too much they talk. Now, are you up to it?"

"Try me, Miss Donaghue. Anything—anything!" he said, and felt his lips trembling.

"You're a good sort. When we get sitting down comfortably I'll tell you the whole business."

She pulled the horse up at the gate in front of a neat white cottage in the middle of an old-fashioned garden. Robert found himself shaking hands with Miss Donaghue's mother, sister, niece, nephew—he hardly knew how many, he was so dazzled. He was for the first time a point of attraction, stared at, talked to. But the vitality of the moment conquered his self-consciousness.

The next morning he stood face to face with Mary. Her hand lay in his. She smiled at him. Though quiet, Robert had repose and a new, alert attention, and Miss Donaghue, with her cheerful, vigorous magnetism and laughter, swept them irresistibly into the full tide of acquaintanceship. Robert felt as if the chrysalis of his individuality had become a butterfly.

Mary was thinner and very white. Suffering and fear had picked hollows in her face. The contour of chin and throat had sharpened.

"But her beauty will come back when she is happy again," Robert thought as he watched her in the shady room, lying back in a big cane chair by the window, moth-like shadows from the garden passing over her. "And I am to pilot her to happiness—I."

Miss Donaghue's plan was this: Mary, disguised as much as possible, with black hair and a heavy mourning veil, was to go to New York with Robert the following day and sail on the *Lucania*. He was to play the part of her brother, with all the deep mourning additions to his one black suit supplied by Miss Donaghue. He was to have permission from an alderman who was a relative of the Donaghue family to remain on board after the sailing and return on the pilot boat. He was to keep his eyes open for detectives and to circumvent, if possible, any detention of Mary in case she was tracked. He was to be the last passenger to enter the pilot boat after saying good-bye to her in the role of brother.

"And now, Mr. Twigg, have you any suggestions to make to help along the masquerade?" asked Miss Donaghue.

The many detective romances Robert had devoured helped him now.

"I would suggest that Mrs. Dunbar walk with a cane, as if she were a little lame, and hold my arm as if for support. In this way also we won't become separated for a second."

"Good!" Miss Donaghue cried. "Don't you think so, Mary?"

"It's getting picturesque," said Mary, with a flicker of her lashes as she smiled. "Please think of more things, Mr. Twigg."

"Then," said Robert, his hands clammy from excitement at his triumph, "let us speak with a foreign accent—or, better still, in a foreign language. I can speak some French."

"I speak French quite well," said Mary. "We lived in Guernsey a long time. There are a good many French people there."

They completed their arrangements even as to names. Should anyone be listening suspiciously she was to be Suzanne and he Pierre.

Mary flung off her lassitude and laughed as they practiced their parts, the Donaghue family sitting about as audience. The limp, the French, Robert's protecting, brotherly air, the change the dark hair made in Mary under the sheltering crape, were all pronounced perfect.

"There won't be a hitch—take my word for it," said Miss Donaghue.

That night Mary talked to Robert of her future. Her uncle, a vicar in Devonshire, was waiting for her to come to him. His wife, who had formerly opposed all his relatives, was now dead and there was a home in the fair Devon country of which Robert had read in "Lorna Doone." She did not care what Nicholas Dunbar would do, once she had reached that vine-covered vicarage. She made no plans; she was content with the assurance of her own heart that, once there and her declaration of independence sent to her husband, he would realize his helplessness. Of her life



with him she said nothing to Robert, but Miss Donaghue did.

"The man's chronic jealousy and cruelty were like something that might happen in Turkey," said Miss Donaghue, her eyes snapping. "I can't tell you the story—it sounds crazy—but from love of her he tortured her, broke her spirit. She was like something trapped, put in a grand cage, very much admired, and then persecuted. The life was killing her. Oh, you are doing a beautiful thing in helping her get back to her own people!"

Robert went into the old-fashioned garden and stood under the stars, staring before him. Miss Donaghue did not guess *how* beautiful to him this mission was. "Good-bye" was the title of the epilogue after this one eventful circumstance of his life; but this fact, which would have made a more ambitious man unhappy, was to Robert a natural part of his common lot. He had expected nothing—not even to hear her ever say good-bye, and by reason of this what might have been a quatrain expressing renunciation was to him an epic of accomplishment. He was thankful.

The next day they sat together on the train. She talked guardedly to him in English, sheltered by the clatter of the cars. He would remember all the things she said—little things, pleasant things, anxious things—as long as he lived. He, Robert Twigg, sat there holding her hand at times, in the role of brother, when a terror of entering New York came upon her. He, Robert Twigg, who had loved her so long without conceiving for one presumptuous moment that their lives would ever touch at any point, had the ecstasy of feeling her lean upon his arm as they walked to a cab. It was wonderful. On board the ship, which they reached designedly only ten minutes before sailing, the terror of discovery made her almost faint; *his* hands drew her to shelter; *his* arm supported her.

"*Ma chère Suzanne, tu as l'air malade,*" he whispered in an accent learned from books.

"*Ah, mon frère, mon frère,*" she managed to sob for the benefit of a sharp-eyed man a few yards away, watching passengers, and whom they both feared, "*je suis triste. Je m'en vais. Adieu! adieu!*"

The sharp-eyed man went away. The ship sailed. There was to be no sensation visibly, nothing to tell bystanders that the most vital moment in the life of one pale little man was on the stroke.

"I'll never forget your kindness, Mr. Twigg," Mary whispered, with a polite manner as the pilot boat drew near.

"I'll never forget you," said Robert.

She had given him her hand. He gripped it until it hurt her. She thought this nervousness, but he was really fighting hard. The wish to tell her all she had meant to him was a storm under which he bent; to take his secret from his heart and show it to her in the light of day; to say to her the three words he had never spoken to any woman; to look into her eyes when she *knew*; to listen to her answer, however pitying or passing; to remember these things as long as he lived. He burned to speak, as, piteously, he stared at her. It would be such a wonderful moment for him. His life would have no greater.

But it did. As he remained still silent, too much the prisoner of habit to break his chain, however much he might jangle it and look at it, he felt Mary's hand on his arm.

"You must go. The pilot's coming. The other passengers are over. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" Robert said, with a stupid misery.

"Good-bye, brother." Mary smiled, lifted her veil and kissed him lightly.

She was startled by the strangled sound that came from his shut lips as he turned away and climbed down the ladder. He looked up at her, a worshiper. She smiled down at him, the veil lifted a little.

"I'll write to you when I reach England," she whispered.

She never did.